



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTY TAKES QUICK ACTION TO COMBAT MOSQUITOS South Bay Wetlands Targeted for County's Aerial Application of Larvicide

Last year County Vector Control conducted five aerial applications of larvicides to determine its effectiveness in controlling mosquito breeding. We found that larvicides significantly reduced mosquito populations for four weeks. Testing reveals that mosquito breeding is on a sharp increase, so monthly aerial applications to key area wetlands will begin today and continue throughout the mosquito season to minimize the impacts of West Nile virus.

The helicopter will apply mosquito larvicide in hard-to-reach, sensitive habitats that are ideal sites for breeding many species of mosquitoes, including those capable of transmitting West Nile virus. Vector Control has identified twenty-five locations that will receive the monthly applications until mosquito breeding naturally declines, which is usually October or November.

Locations along the Otay and Tijuana Rivers are part of the aerial application schedule and are scheduled for treatment on Friday, May 21, 2004, at 12:45 PM. A media staging area will be located at Fenton Pond on Hollister Street, south of Main Street and north of Palm Avenue (Thomas Guide page 1330, grid B-6). Media Event signs will be posted to help provide directions.

"West Nile Virus is a very real threat to the people and animals in this region," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox. "The County is fighting to eliminate mosquitoes at their source, using a helicopter to target breeding areas. We are also counting on the public to join in the fight against disease-carrying mosquitoes by removing standing water from around the house, making sure window and door screens are in good condition and using insect repellent containing DEET when outdoors."

Granules containing *Bacillus sphaericus*, a naturally occurring bacterium registered by the Environmental Protection Agency, will be spread by helicopter, providing "pin point accuracy" in difficult-to-access wetlands. Designed to dissolve in water, the larvicide kills developing mosquito larvae. *Bacillus sphaericus* is not toxic to humans and does not pose risks to wildlife, non-target species, or the environment.

Last year, 46 states reported nearly 10,000 human cases of West Nile virus illness, and 262 human deaths. In 2003 five dead birds and one horse were tested positive for the virus in San Diego County. This year there are no positive findings, yet, but we can expect to see our first human case. For more tips on protecting your home and family, visit the County's official West Nile virus website at www.SDFightTheBite.com or call toll-free 888.551.INFO.

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